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A Century of STEEL in Sydney

100 YEARS

STEELWORKERS MÉTALLOS

Metal Pour #1 Open Hearth

Electric Arc Furnace

PRESIDENTS OF LOCAL 1064, UNITED STEELWORKERS OF AMERICA

The first regular meeting of Local 1064, United Steelworkers of America was held at the Ashby Hall on June 1st,1938 chaired by President Carl Neville.

1937-Carl Neville
1939-Norman MacKenzie
1941-Dan MacKay
1941-George MacEachern
1942-George R.MacNeil
1946-M.E.Corbett
1952-Ben O'Neil
1956-Martin Merner
1958-George MacNeil
1960-Martin Merner
1962-James Ryan
1964-Martin Merner
1970-Winston Ruck
1974-Gordon Kiley
1976-James Ryan
1978-Rod Black
1979-Paul Grezel
1984-John Callahan
1989-Bill McNeil
1991-David K.Ervin
1994-Charles Macdonald
1997- Bill McNeil

The last regular meeting of the present executive of Local 1064, United Steelworkers of America took place at 7:30 PM, May 15,2001 at the Steelworkers Hall chaired by President Bill Mc Neil

OFFICERS	FIRST EXECUTIVE	PRESENT EXECUTIVE
PRESIDENT	Carl Neville	Bill McNeil
VICE-PRESIDENT	Coll McDonald	Ray Foley
RECORDING SECRETARY	James Nicholson	Murdock McRae
FINANCIAL SECRETARY	George McEacheran	Barry Neville
TREASURER	Charles Burke	John Martell
GUIDE	Walter Pike	Roddie Livingstone
INSIDE GUARD	Edward Gillis	Frank Corbett
OUTSIDE GUARD	R. McDonald	Robert Jessome

AUDIT AND TRUSTEES- David K. Ervin, David Oursin, John Yhard

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the USWA and the following individuals for their help and support over the years: International President (acting)-Leo Gerard, National Director-Lawrence McBrearty, District 6 Director-Harry Hynd and John Kingston, Staff Representative.

Production of this booklet was coordinated by Bill McNeil, Dave Ervin (Text), Ray Martheleur (Photos), Mike Peters (Art Work) and G. Langille (Front Cover Photo).

A Century of STEEL in Sydney

THE DISCO YEARS

Henry M.Whitney, a business owner from Boston incorporated Dominion Iron and Steel company (DISCO) on June 22,1899. Whitney had centralized control of the Cape Breton coal industry in 1893 under the Dominion Coal Company (**Domco**). The abundant supply of coal, limestone and iron ore, along with an already existing port facility and railway terminal were contributing factors in the decision to build here. He originally tried to merge with the Nova Scotia Steel and Coal Company (Scotia), which in 1883 had poured the first steel ingots in Canada outside of New Glasgow. When this plan fell through Whitney bought the rights (from Scotia) to half of the Wabana Iron ore mines at Bell Island in Newfoundland. Scotia used the money to buy the General Mining Association coalfields on the north side of Sydney Harbour and to move its basic steel making operations to Sydney Mines leaving the steel processing in Trenton N.S.

In the meantime Disco, which was capitalized at $25,000,000, was given a 99-year lease on the site and 30 years of tax relief by the town (soon to be city) of Sydney. A retired American steel executive Arthur J. Moxam was hired as the first General Manager of the company. As part of the deal Moxam moved a replica of a castle he had built in Ohio to a location on Kings Road in Sydney. The plant was set up with the most modern European equipment and construction proceeded throughout 1900 –01 and the first heat of steel was tapped from the open hearth on December 31,1901. When the Steel Plant opened it was considered the largest iron and steel producer in Canada with the ability to compete with the industry giants in Great Britain, Germany and the United States. In 1900 prior to it's opening Sir Wilfred Laurier, Canada's Prime Minister prophesized that that Sydney "would become not only the Pittsburgh of Canada, but the Glasgow and Belfast of Canada."

This plant was built on this location because of the Wabana iron, the Cape Breton coal and limestone, and the closeness of the Eastern North America and European markets. The equipment was top of the line. The Coke Oven Battery of 400 OTTO-HOFFMAN ovens were constructed with all the by-products recovery units, which were

rare in America at that time. The four Blast Furnaces had a total capacity of 1200 Tons. The Blast Furnace gas was used to power the turbines for the blast and to heat the stoves and the excess was used to create electricity for other areas of the plant. The Open Hearth Department had ten 50-ton tilting furnaces. Unfortunately the designers of the plant made many mistakes in its construction and the cost overruns were about $7-$8 Million dollars which meant that the only way that the investors would see the profits that they wanted was to keep the workers wages at the lowest level possible.

The plant changed the ethnic and cultural make-up of Sydney and Cape Breton Island. Italians came from Boston and later from Europe as well as Ukrainians, Polish, Lebanese, Syrian, Hungarians and Jews all arrived in Sydney searching for a new and better future. African-Americans arrived from Alabama as well as the West Indies and other parts of Nova Scotia. Many of the rural residents of Cape Breton and Newfoundland descended from the original Scotch, Irish, and French settlers, came to make a new future in Sydney. The population of Sydney in 1890 was around 3,000; by 1920 it had passed 20,000 mostly as a result of the steel industry.

In 1902 the 35 Inch Blooming Mill was finished, and Whitney sold his shares in Disco to a Montreal group headed by James Ross. Graham Fraser from Nova Scotia Steel and Coal at Trenton soon replaced Moxam as General Manager. (Moxam's son had recently been killed in an accident at the Blooming Mill.) At this time the plant provided a good customer for Whitney's coal mines and took advantage of a federal bounty on the production of iron and steel ingots and billets, which could be sold on the international markets. In 1903 the Foundry and Machine Shop came on line.

Since 1901, the major products of the steel plant have been semi-processed ingots and blooms, billets and slabs. Wire and nails, and since 1905 railroad rails have become our most important finished products. Most of the modern equipment at the new plant was steam driven and over the decades it was updated and electrified. There was a coexistence of manual labor and machine-operated labor in the plant throughout its history. This was the first steel mill in North America to produce rails from vacuum degaussed steel, to manufacture 78 foot and 25 meter rails on a production basis and the first to use a rail straighter on all the rails it produced. One of the major problems over the years of private ownership was the fact that the owners always seemed to take as much profit out of the plant as they could without reinvesting in more modern equipment or proper maintenance.

Throughout these first few years the company ran an annual deficit and in 1903 forced a wage reduction on the workers. In 1904 the Provincial Workmens Association organized a strike, which was broken by the company who then imposed wage cuts and banned the union. The Rod Mill opened that year followed by the Rail Mill in 1905.

These formative years saw many concerns with the high sulphur content of the coal, and the high silicon content of the iron ore and in 1907 the company installed two Bessemer converters to help resolve the problems. Despite all that, by 1908 Disco had 85% of the domestic rail market. The following year Disco came under the ownership of a group from Toronto headed by J.H. Plummer, which also took over Domco and its coalfields and merged them into Dominion Steel Company. A new Blast Furnace was also added in 1909 and the new company took over the Cumberland Railway and Coal Company with its Springhill coalfields in 1910. The Wire and Nail mills went into production that year followed by 4 Coke Ovens of 30 oven batteries in 1911. 1912 saw another Blast Furnace and the following year two 500 Ton Mixing furnaces came on line.

The War years were profitable times for Disco. A Coke oven byproduct called toluol was one of the active ingredients of TNT. The Rail Mill was converted to roll shell rounds and a 16-inch mill was built in Sydney and rushed into production for the war effort. A contract was given to the Peck Rolling Mills in Montreal to process shell blanks from the Sydney billets. As a result of this arrangement Peck soon became a subsidiary of Disco. It was during the war years that the Bessemer converters were shut down and the two 500-ton mixing furnaces were converted to 100-ton open-hearth furnaces.

In 1918 a 110-inch plate mill was added to the plant, used briefly and then mothballed till 1939 when World War 2 broke out. Two 60-oven batteries installed by Koppers Company replaced the Coke Ovens and went into operation in October of 1918 and March 1919 respectively.

THE BESCO ERA

1920 saw the establishment of the largest corporate merger in Canada to that date. Mr. Roy Wolvin led a syndicate that created the British Empire Steel Corporation (BESCO), which took over control all of the Wabana iron ore mines at Bell Island in Newfoundland, most of the coal-mines in Nova Scotia including both sides of Sydney Harbour, Stellarton and Thorburn in Pictou County and Springhill in Cumberland County. They also combined the Disco Steel Plant in Sydney, the Scotia Steel operations in Trenton and Sydney Mines and the Halifax Shipyards. Besco was heavily over-capitalized in order to form this company and the result was that there was no funds to maintain or modernize the steel operations and also led to cutting back the wages of the steelworkers and miners in order to pay dividends to the shareholders.

The coke ovens, blast furnaces and open-hearth furnaces at Sydney Mines were closed completely in 1921 and a new Koppers 60-oven battery was added to the coke ovens in Sydney. Another effort was made to unionize the steelworkers in 1923 this led to the military occupancy of Sydney by a mounted provincial police force formed in Halifax for the occupation. The coal miners came out in sympathy with the steelworkers but they were defeated. The company then formed the Employee Representative Council (a company controlled union) which lasted till 1937. A new General Manager H.J.Kelly was appointed and many officials were dismissed. The miners went on strike and still had their wages cut. The years between the wars were lean times for Canada's steel industry causing Besco to go into bankruptcy in 1927, and ALGOMA in 1932.

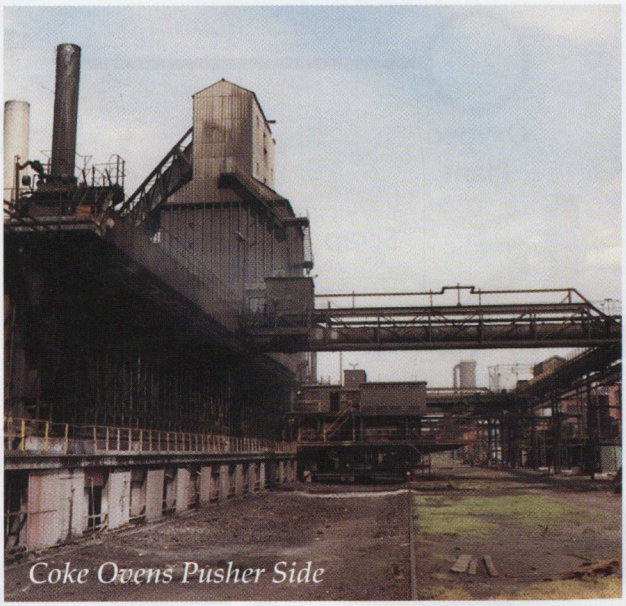
DOSCO DAYS

With Besco in financial collapse and its components placed into receivership the steel plant began to prosper mainly because of the Maritime freight rate subsidies passed by the Federal Government. The Disco receivers also spent over a million dollars on improvements at the Sydney plant. These included the electrification of the shipping piers and the overhaul of four blast furnaces (the other two furnaces were shut down). In 1928 Roy Wolvin was forced to resign his control over Besco and the following year new investments from Montreal and Britain were used to form Dominion Steel and Coal Corporation (DOSCO). C.B.Mc Naught was the first president of the new corporation and Sir Newton Moore succeeded him in 1931.

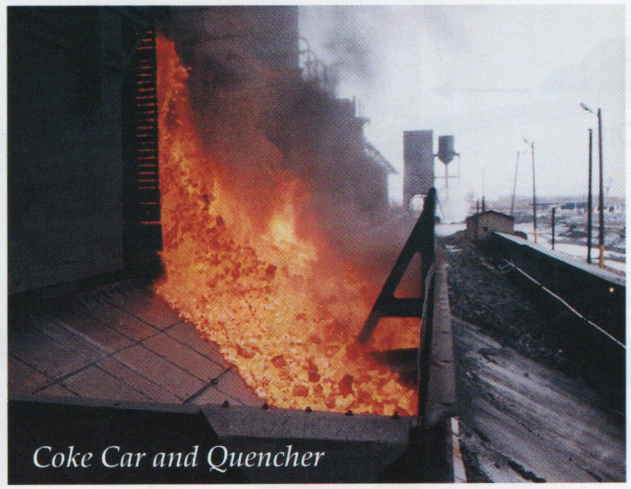
In May of 1931 a new process was invented and put into place at the plant. This was the Mackie Retarded Cooling Process developed by plant metallurgist I..C.Mackie, (this method became a standard practice worldwide by allowing rails to cool slowly thereby avoiding cracking). The great Depression caused cut backs in production and in 1932 there was very little employment at the plant at all. This was before the days of Unemployment insurance so the work force suffered greatly.

Because of the suffering of the workers there were more attempts to unionize the workforce but they failed until 1936 when the Steelworkers Organizing Committee (SWOC) held organizing meetings at the Temperance Hall on Falmouth Street and was chartered as Local 1064 on December 13th. In 1937 the provincial government caved in to the pressure from the miners union and SWOC and passed the first Trade Union Act in Canada giving the right to organize a union. In the summer of 1937 Dosco was forced to recognize the union in Sydney and Trenton and institute the automatic Dues Check-off, but it wasn't till 1940 that a contract was signed. During these early years the union office was located above Moraff's Pool Hall on Charlotte Street. In 1936 Arthur Cross of Montreal became Dosco President, and in 1937 a 10-ton electric arc furnace was installed to produce small specialty alloy orders. The Rod Mill was modernized by changing it over from steam power to electric operation.

According to our information the first official meeting of Local 1064 was held at the Ashby Hall on June 1, 1938. Dosco entered another profitable period with the beginning of the Second World War. There was full employment and even boys and women were added to the work force until the war ended. The Federal Government funded improvements to all the major steel makers during the war but most of the money went to the Ontario plants (STELCO, ALGOMA and the new DOFASCO). Sydney's Member of Parliament Clarie Gillis (CCF) helped to force the

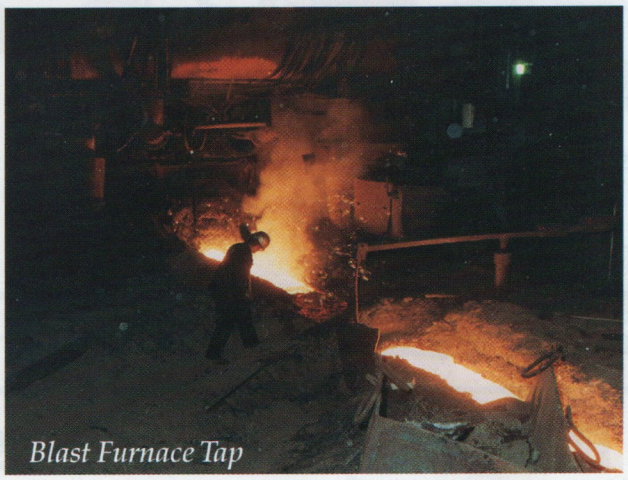


Coke Ovens Pusher Side



Coke Car and Quencher

Blast Furnace

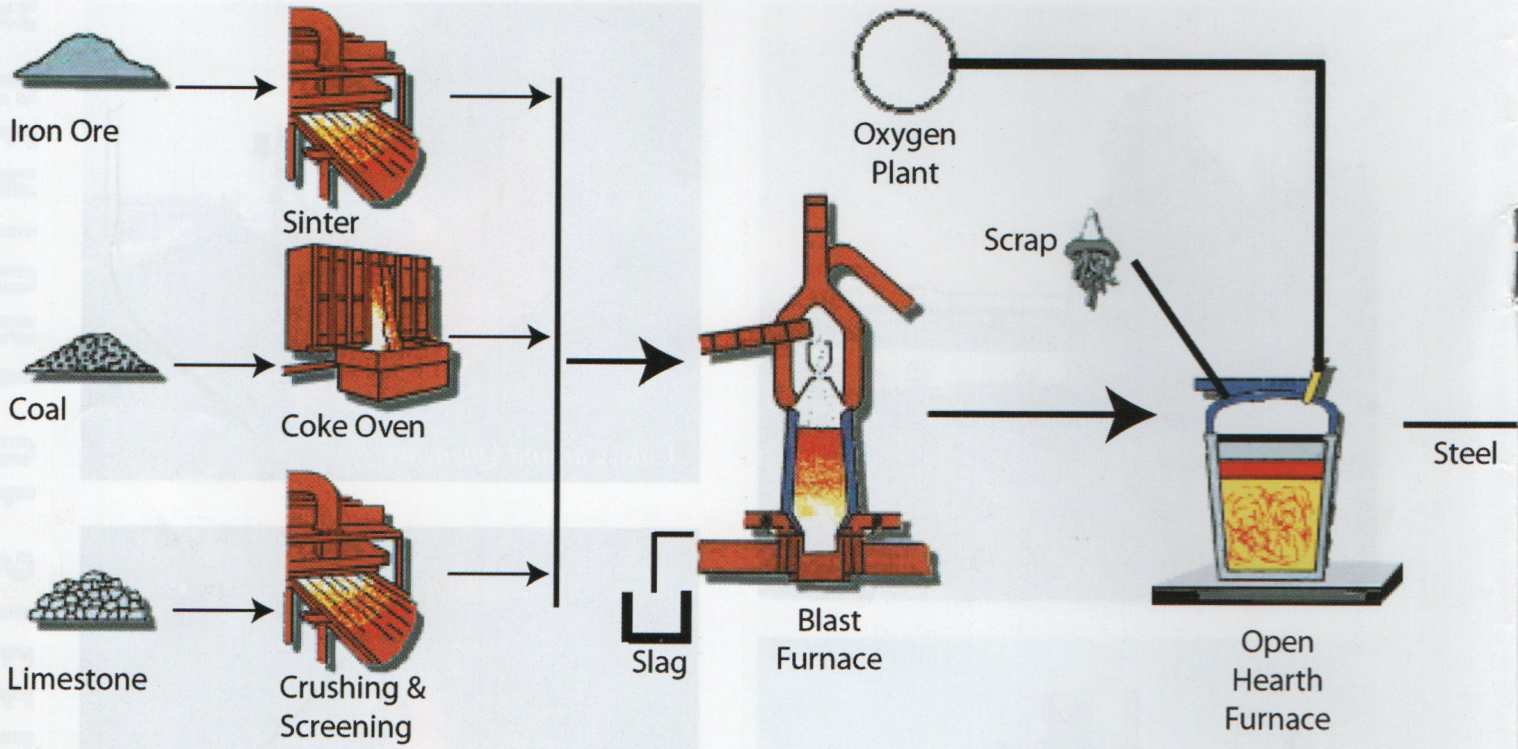


Blast Furnace Tap

Blast Furnace Metal to Open Hearth

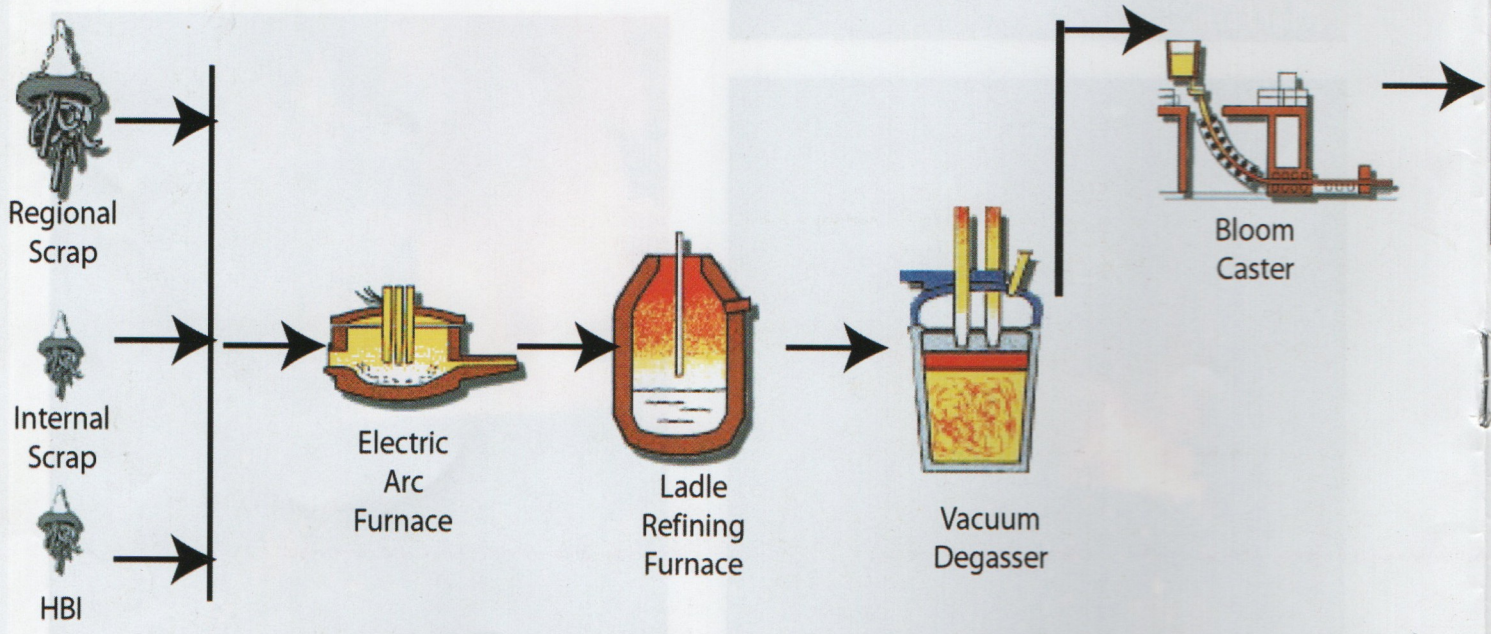
Steel Tap #3 Open Hearth

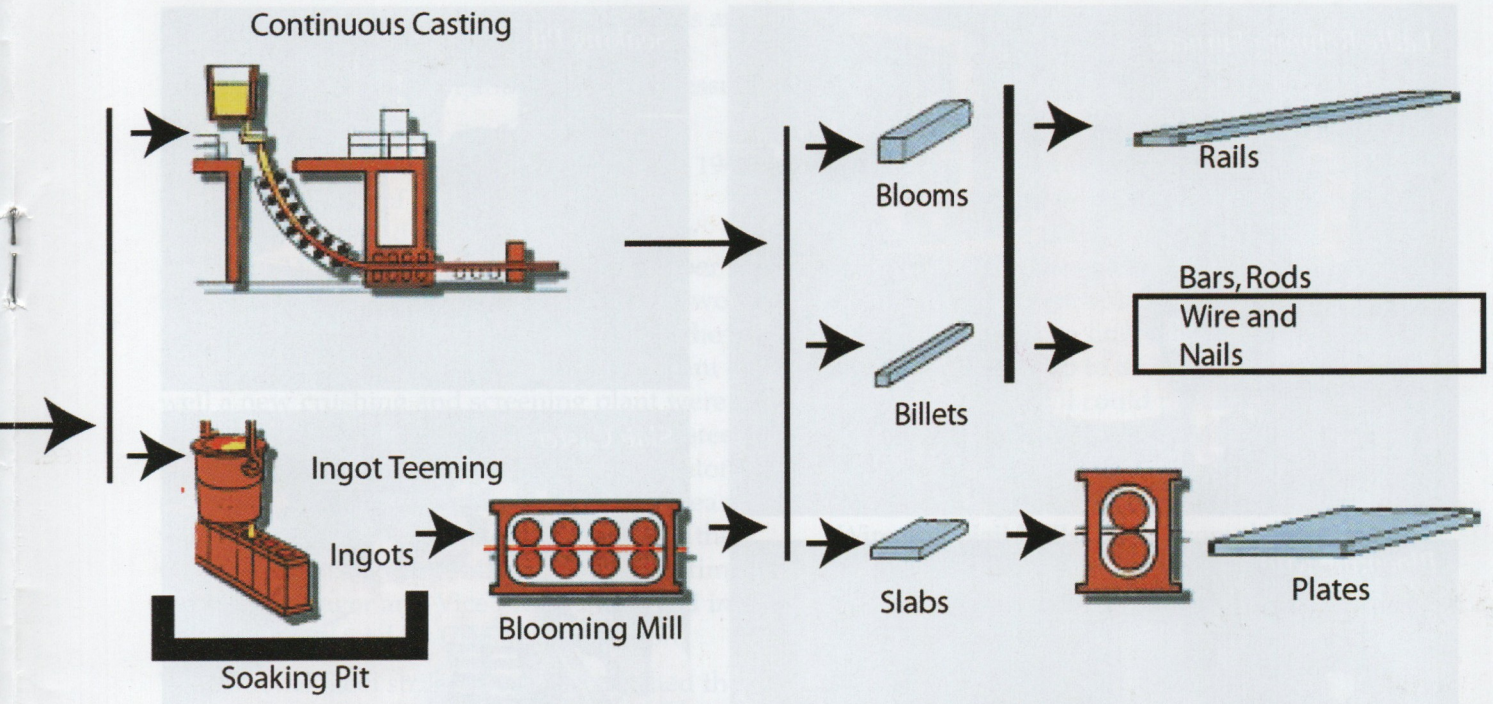
Flow Chart of Steel Mill 1960



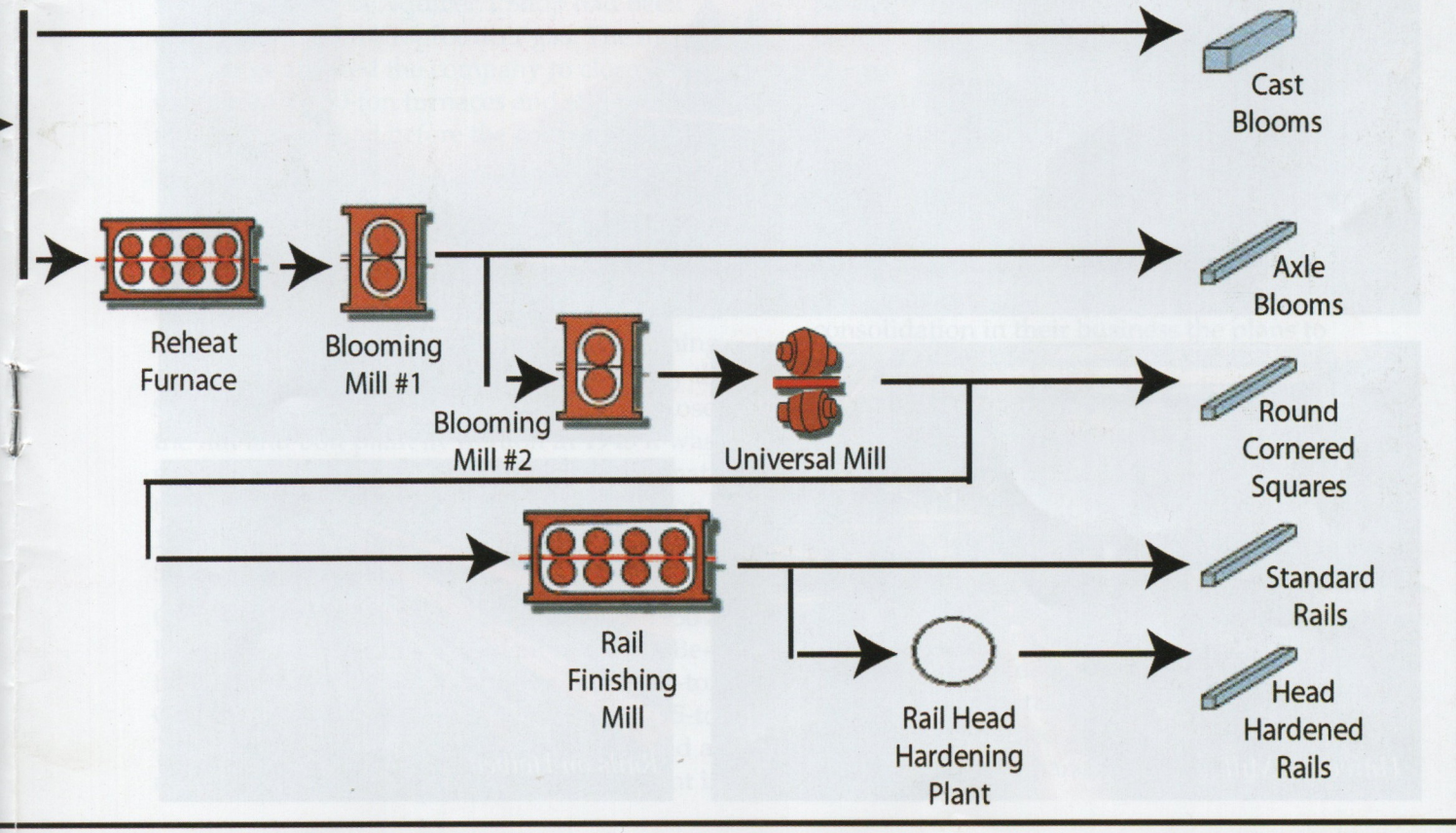
Sydney Steel Mi

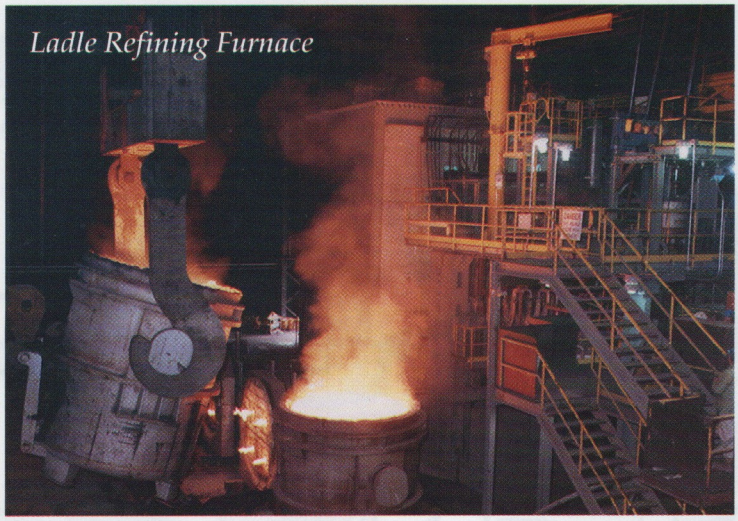
Flow Chart of Steel Mill 1990

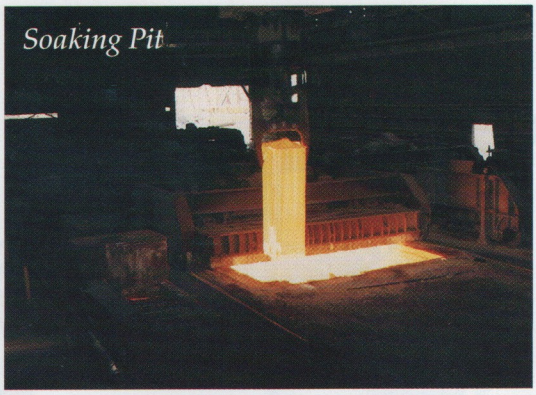


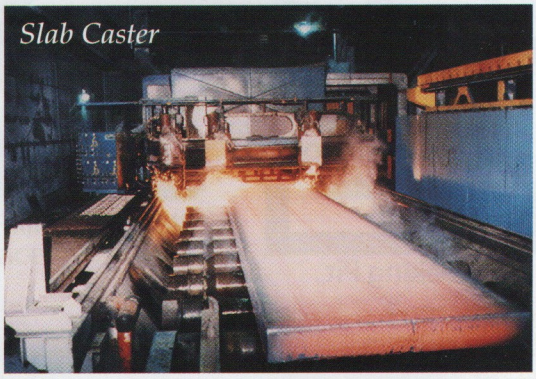


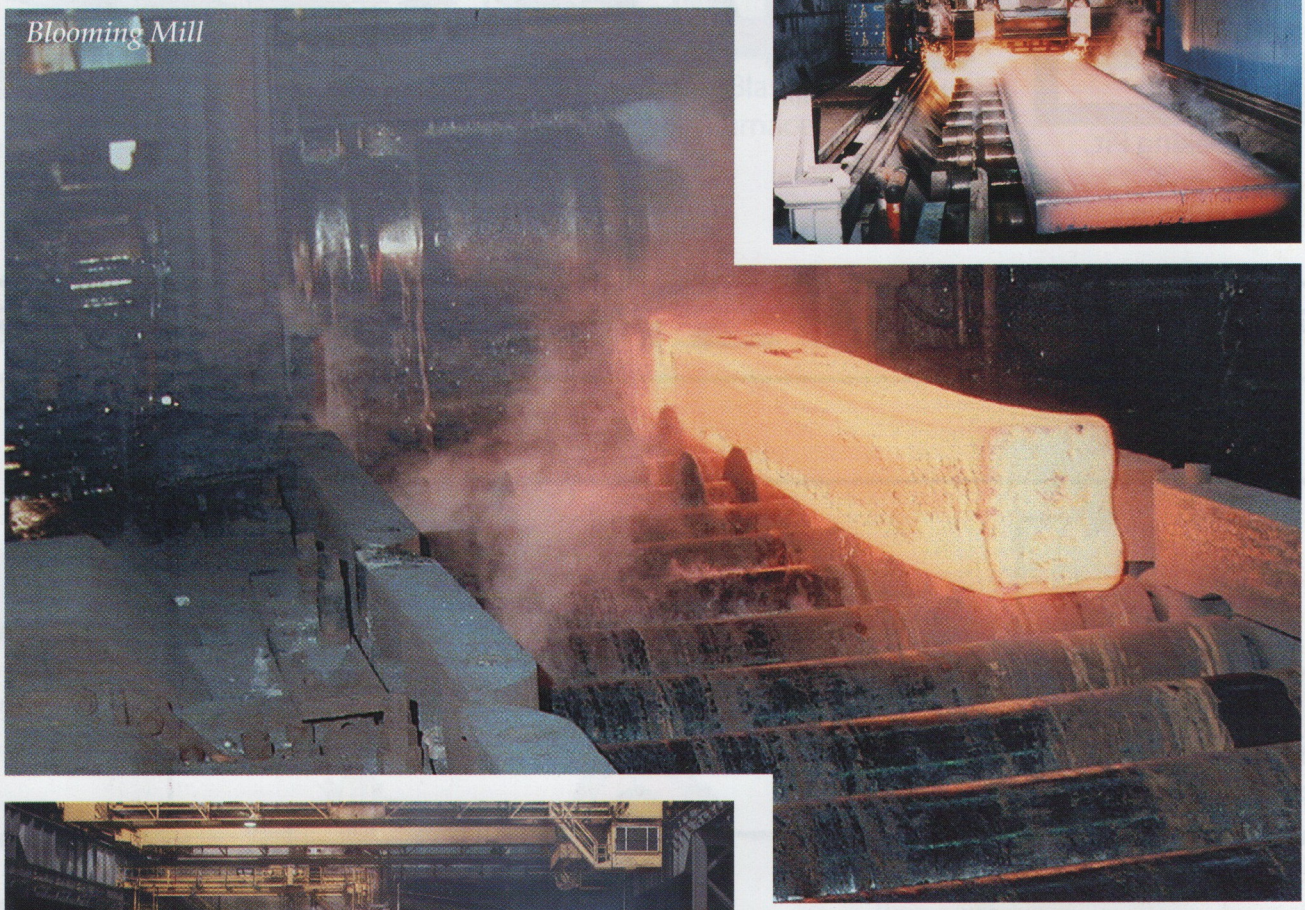
ll Then and Now

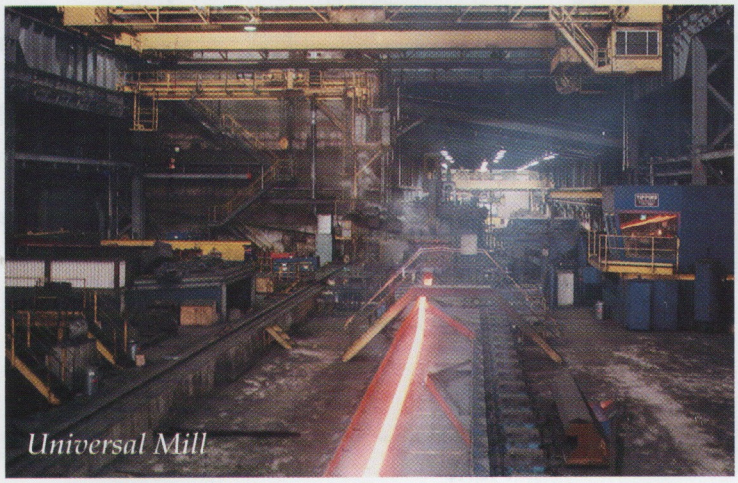


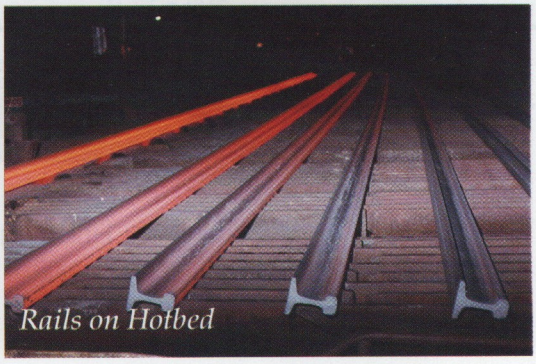

Ladle Refining Furnace


Soaking Pit


Slab Caster


Blooming Mill


Universal Mill


Rails on Hotbed

financing of two new 120-ton Open Hearths and the renovation of the mothballed Plate Mill because of the war effort and the public pressure on the government.

A third 120-ton Open Hearth was added in 1942 bringing the total of large furnaces to 5 in Number 2 Shop and there were still 5 of the original 50 ton furnaces operating in Number 1 Shop. Funds were also made available for two Blast Furnaces one completed in 1943 and the other after the war (1947). The sintering plant as well a new crushing and screening plant were opened in 1943 also. There was a national steel strike in 1943, which involved Sydney, Trenton and ALGOMA, which brought a slight increase in wages. A new 700-ton mixer was added to the Open Hearth Shop in 1944. H.J.Kelly long time General Manager and Vice President retired in 1945 to be replaced by C.M. (Clem) Anson.

The national Steel strike in 1947 established the United Steelworkers Union at Dosco, Algoma and Stelco. Dosco wouldn't agree to the pay increase until the federal government agreed to a subsidy and that meant that Ontario workers would always be ahead of the Dosco workers. The new practice of burning Bunker C oil to fire the Open Hearths began in 1947. By 1950 all five furnaces in Number 2 Shop and 5 of the original 50-ton furnaces in Number 1 Shop had been converted to oil from producer gas. The increase in savings allowed the company to close down the other five 50-ton furnaces and still produce more tonnage than before the conversion.

In 1948 C.B.Lang became President of Dosco and Arthur Cross became Chairman of the Board. The steel industry boomed in Canada throughout the 40's and 50's but where STELCO and ALGOMA did major modernization work, Dosco invested their dollars in improvements to their finishing mills in central Canada rather than diversify the Sydney or Trenton facilities. When Dosco closed the nut and bolt plant in Trenton in 1943 it was a sign of the future plans. A new Coke Oven battery of 53 Kopper ovens went into production in 1949. The workforce at Sydney that year stood at 5400.

C.B.Lang replaced Cross as Chairman in 1950 and Lionel Forsyth became President of Dosco. Between 1948 and 1956 the capacity of the 120-ton Open Hearth furnaces were increased to 195-tons. The Bloom Mill was modernized in 1953 and a new battery of 61 Kopper-Becker ovens went into production at the Coke Ovens. The remaining 50-ton furnaces in Number 1 Open Hearth Shop were closed after 53 years of production.

In 1956 the Sydney plant consisted of a Coke Oven Department with 120 ovens capable of producing a total of 2000 tons daily. Three Blast Furnaces with a annual capacity of 550,000 tons of iron, and a 700-ton Mixing furnace. The Open Hearth Department still had 5 furnaces with a new one coming on line, which would bring total steel production up to 850,000 tons annually. The new Blooming Mill could process 1,000 tons per 8-hour shift. Aside from the Mackie Cooling Tanks (1931) the rest of the operations (Rail Mill, Rail Finishing Mill, Rod and Bar Mill and the Wire and Nail Mills) dated from the pre World War 1 era. Dosco also had a large mechanical and electrical department that included the Foundry and the Shops (Machine, Carpenter, Pattern, Boiler, Blacksmith, Pipe, Car Repair, Locomotive Repair and Electrical Repair). There were also the Shipping Piers and an extensive Rail Transport Network. In 1956 the open hearth furnace crews produced 49,000 tons of rail heats without a single "off-heat" a world record yet to be beaten.

In 1957 the President Lionel Forsythe passed away and later that year Dosco was taken over by A.V. Roe Ltd the Canadian subsidiary of Hawker Siddeley a major British Corporation. Crawford Gordon was appointed the new President of Dosco. Over the next few years a Coal blending and pulverizing plant came on stream in the Coke Ovens and Oxygen lancing was inaugurated in the Open Hearths, and Albert L. Fairly replaced Gordon as President. In February 1959 the federal government cancelled A.V.Roe's contract to build the "Avro Arrow" fighter aircraft and as a result of this restructuring and consolidation in their business the plans to develop the steel arm, Dosco suffered a setback.

In the early 60's the bottom fell out of the steel markets and the answer in Sydney was massive lay-offs. The workforce at Dosco went from 4,000 in August of 1960 to 2780 in December of 1962. In 1964 Dosco had a study commissioned to review its steel making options. Basic Oxygen Furnaces (BOF) were rejected as being too expensive and it was decided to try oxygen lancing and phase out the Wabana ore for a better source. A new oxygen plant was installed, two blast furnaces (#1 and #3) were relined and plans were made for a new raw material handling pier.

The United Steelworkers Local 1064 had become large enough and financially secure enough by this time to invest in the future by purchasing a lot of land at the corner of Prince and Disco Streets to erect their own building. The Steelworkers Hall officially opened on Saturday November 2, 1963.

Dosco closed the Wabana Mines in 1966 and switched over to Brazilian ore and Labrador pellets. Because of the fact that the Coke Ovens were importing American coal to blend with the Cape Breton coal an agreement was made with the federal government (DEVCO) to take over the mines and phase them out over a period of time. The following year the province and Dosco did a study that concluded that Sydney had no real advantages for steel production and its distance from the markets was a serious disadvantage. The only use for Sydney's semi-finished steel was to supply Dosco's Quebec rolling mills (Contrecoeur). However on Friday October 13th,1967 (BLACK FRIDAY) the company announced that the steel operations would close down by April 1968.

THE SYSCO EPILOGUE

The protests that followed have become part of the folklore of industrial Cape Breton including the "Parade of Concern" on November 20.As a result of this political activism an announcement was made that the provincial government would create a Crown Corporation to operate the Sydney Steel Plant. In 1967, R.B.Cameron became the first Chairman and President of Sydney Steel Corporation (SYSCO). The plant was an economic success for a few years due to the temporary international boom in steel markets and a deal that Cameron made with Devco to buy the Coke Ovens from Sysco and guarantee coke at a low price for five years. In October the government committed 40 Million Dollars over 3 years to modernize the plant. During the same period the Province of Quebec took over Dosco's operations at Contrecoeur (SIDBEC-DOSCO) and agreed to continue the purchase of blooms and billets from Sysco.

Cameron appointed Derek Haysom as President and production in 1969 reached the magical total of One Million Tons. The following year Premier G.I.Smith announced a $92 Million modernization for Sysco. Unfortunately, rather than build BOF's to replace the outdated Open Hearth, Haysom and William Wells a plant official invented submerged injection process (SIP) and tried it out in the open hearths at great expense but no success. Millions of the modernization dollars were wasted in this manner.

The first strike in 25 years took place in 1972 over wages and was settled with a compromise agreement. The following year the coke contract with Devco expired and the price was doubled to reflect real market conditions. In 1974 Sysco bought the Coke Ovens back from Devco for $10 Million dollars. The five years that Devco owned the Coke Ovens represented a hidden federal subsidy saving Sysco about $40 Million. Because of a temporarily strong world steel market, plans were made for a major steel plant at Gabarus (Cansteel). This idea put further modernization of Sysco on hold and both the Cansteel idea and the rest of the modernization were cancelled when the steel market slumped from 1975-77. During this period of change the Rail Finishing Mill was rebuilt with a new rail straighter installed, a Continuous Caster and a Vacuum Degassing unit were commissioned at the Open Hearth, and a new Reheat Furnace was installed at the Blooming Mill. Unfortunately Sidbec-Dosco installed an Electric Arc furnace in 1974 and stopped buying steel from Sysco, and despite the Vacuum Degassing of steel most of the major rail customers insisted on the continued use of the Mackie Tanks.

During the early 70's the Wire and Nail Mill as well as the Rod and Bar Mills were closed down. Some of the Wire and Nail Mill equipment was sold and set up in Dartmouth where it operated profitably into the 90's. Tom Kent an Ottawa bureaucrat was appointed President in 1976 and by this time Sysco's only finished product was rails and there was a limited bloom market. In 1979 Kent retired and moved over to Devco as President. Jack McCarthy a veteran steel man replaced him. The Continuous Caster went into mothballs in 1980 because it was impossible to run it economically supplied by the Open Hearths. R.B.Cameron announced the planned closure of a Blast Furnace, which would reduce the workforce by 900 men. This caused calls for Cameron's resignation and he soon retired to be replaced by Michael Cochrane as Chairman of the Board.

In 1981 another modernization plan was announced, $96 Million (20% Provincial-80% Federal) would be used in Phase 1 of a long-term plan. The first phase would include rebuilding one coke oven battery and building a new blast furnace. In June McCarthy died and in October Ernie Boutilier was named Sysco President. The plan to rebuild the coke oven battery was put on hold but the new Blast Furnace was built and went into operation in 1984 with a daily capacity of 1,350 tons. Also added were gas cleaning facilities and 200-ton hot metal cars (Torpedo Ladles) to deliver the molten iron to the open hearth, thereby making the Mixer furnace obsolete. The new Blast Furnace never did get up to full capacity because the open hearths couldn't use as much iron as the blast furnace could produce.

In 1986 on the 50th Anniversary of the establishment of Local 1064 a monument was erected in front of the Steelworkers Hall to honor those workers who had died in the performance of their labor at the plant. Over 300 names are engraved on the monument and they do not make up a complete list as many died later as a result of their injuries or their work environment. This environment has also endangered the health of every steelworker past and present and the larger community that surrounds the plant.

During the next few years the modernization was the favorite subject for rumors as the various levels of government changed their minds back and forth. Instead of modernizing the coke ovens it was announced in late 1985 that a federal grant of $40 Million dollars would be made available for the clean up of the Tar Ponds if the company agreed to close the coke ovens by November of 1988. Phase 2 of the modernization was announced to include a modern electric arc furnace that could take both molten iron and scrap, a ladle refining furnace, refurbishing the continuous caster, rehabilitation of the reheat furnace and the purchase of a rail head-hardening facility. This agreement was signed in February 1986 and before the end of the year without long-term orders from CN and with a consultants report showing poor markets over the next few years the plants future was again in doubt. The Union with the "Save our Steel" committee's threats to picket the 1987 Winter Games managed to keep the modernization on track.

In February of 1987 Premier John Buchanan announced that because of a new long-term rail agreement with CN the renewal of Sysco would go ahead. Tippens Inc. would manage the project, which would include the electric arc furnace; a bloom casting facility, ladle refining and needed improvements in services and administration (cost-shared under the federal-provincial agreement) and the province in conjunction with the company would finance a Universal Mill. A strike in February 1988 over wages was settled with a much needed wage raise. During the strike the coke ovens closed permanently (5 months before schedule).

In January 1989 Industry Minister Donald Cameron announced that the Blast Furnace (built in 1984 at a cost of $40 Million dollars) would be closed meaning another 800 jobs would be lost. The Blast Furnace cast the last heat in June 1989 and shortly after that the conversion to the new modernized mini mill took place. A new Fuchs Electric arc furnace and a Ladle Refining furnace replaced the open-hearth furnaces; a vacuum degasser was also installed as part of the steel shop. One of the major improvements was a closed water-cooling system. No longer would the cooling water from the plant have a toxic effect on Sydney Harbor. A new continuous caster for blooms was constructed next to the slab caster, which had been mothballed in 1980. The Reheat Furnace at the Blooming mill was rebuilt and the old rolling mills were replaced by a second-hand and untested Universal Mill, which the Province purchased (outside the joint federal-provincial modernization agreement). An American company called Tippens managed this modernization program. In the meantime Ernie Boutlier, Sysco's President moved to the same position at Devco. He was replaced by John Strasser (Sysco's chief metallurgist) as President.

The new Sysco mini mill had about 800 employees, a steel shop that could produce up to 600,000 tons of steel annually; the universal mill could handle that output but was never put to the test because the order books never met expectations. There were continuing problems with the commissioning of the Universal Mill. It never seemed to meet the levels of production the sellers had guaranteed. Because of performance guarantees on the new equipment, Strasser held back the final payments from Tippens until the problems were corrected. As usual the political process

interfered and Strasser was eventually replaced by an outsider and Tippens was paid.

It was announced by Premier Donald Cameron that Jim Powers was being brought in because of his reputation at revitalizing failing steel plants in the U.S.A. As it turned out most of the workforce was against bringing in this high priced executive but after his first few months on the job it was realized that this was a different type of president. He brought in his own team to work with him and these people answered any questions that were asked (what a concept-telling the workers what was going on, and why changes were being made). Powers was hired to make Sysco successful but in January 1992 Premier Cameron changed the rules again and announced that Sysco was for sale. The provincial government hired a consulting company from Toronto to handle the privatization and sale.

The provincial election in May 1993 brought Premier John Savage into office and the Liberals not only continued the sale process but also made some kind of a deal with Minmetals a company owned by the government of China that had come to Sysco to purchase rails. This so-called partnership lasted until 1995. The public was then informed that Minmetals had never paid for their share in the partnership so the agreement with them was cancelled.

The provincial government next tried to sell Sysco to a Mexican steel company (GAN) and when that fell through an announcement was made July 31,1998 by Premier Russell MacLellan that a new arrangement was being made with the Dutch steel company Hoogovens to take over the running of Sysco to make it more saleable and to find a strategic partnership of companies to take over the plant. In the summer of 1999 the Progressive Conservatives under John Hamm who were elected on the major promise to close Sydney Steel if they couldn't sell it, defeated the Liberals under MacLellan. In December the sale of Sysco to an American partnership was announced. By the end of January that deal had collapsed and the province also told Hoogovens to leave the plant.

The province then hired Ernst and Young as receivers and assigned them the task of finding a purchaser for the operating plant or it's assets. In the meantime the receivers stopped taking orders for rails or semi-finished steel and the last heat was poured from the Electric Arc on April 19th, and the last rail was rolled on May 22,2000. By the end of July most of the production had been shipped and the plant was effectively shut down. After a few months of receiving various offers E&Y chose DUFERCO a Swiss-American company as the best future for Sysco. Duferco planned to close the Universal and Rail mills and just operate the Steel Shop to supply slab steel to one of its mills in the United States. Since this plan would cause another downsizing of Sysco, the United Steelworkers of America proceeded to negotiate an enhanced pension plan and severance package with the province, which was accepted in October 2000. This provided pensions for anyone with 25 or more years of seniority (575 employees) and severance packages for the remaining 211 workers.

After accepting a collective agreement with Duferco that would potentially provide employment to the severed workers, Premier Hamm and Economic Development Minister Balser informed the province that the deal with Duferco had collapsed and that the province would honor the enhanced pension and severance agreements.

As we approach June 1,2001 the official pension and severance date for the former workforce we look back at nearly a century of steel making in Sydney, and we see the city that evolved as a result of the industry. Generations of steelworkers have worked at the plant and we have had pride in doing a good job and producing a good product. We supplied rails that bridged our nation and others; nails that built our homes, and plate that helped our country win two World Wars. We can be proud of our accomplishments, take pride in producing the best rails in the world, and never forget those who have gone on before us.

Text complied by David K. Ervin

THE END OF AN ERA FOR THE STEEL CENTER OF ATLANTIC CANADA

PRESIDENTS OF THE SYDNEY STEEL PLANT

DISCO

1899- Henry M. Whitney
1902- James Ross
1909- J.H.Plummer

BESCO

1920- Roy Wolvin

DOSCO

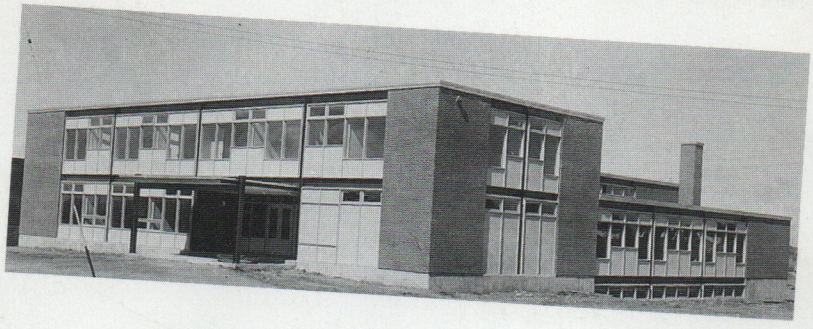
1929- C.B.Mc Naught
1931- Sir Newton Moore
1936- Arthur Cross
1948- C.B. Lang
1950- Lionel Forsyth
Hawker Siddeley-DOSCO
1957- Crawford Gordon
1959- Albert L. Fairly
1965- C.H. Drury

SYSCO

1967- R.B. Cameron
1970- D.W.R. Haysom
1973-E.F. Alderton
1977- T.W. Kent
1979- R.B. Cameron
1980- J.J. McCarthy
1982- E.A. Boutilier
1988- J.A. Strasser
1991- J.R. Powers
1994- J.A. Rudderham (Interim)
1994- B.C. Bowman
1996- J.A. Rudderham

Original General Office

Old Rail Mill



UNITED STEELWORKERS OF AMERICA
LOCAL 1064

Official Opening
Saturday, November 2nd, 1963